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Spy suspect lawyer casts doubt on FBI

From Chicago Tribune wires

BALTIMORE—A defense lawyer on Thursday pressed the FBI to explain why accused spy Ronald Pelton was not told of his right to remain silent during questioning that led to his arrest on charges of selling secrets to the Soviets.

Pelton, a former communications specialist with the National Security Agency, was interrogated at an Annapolis hotel last November for several hours, during which he gave authorities information about his contacts with Soviet KGB agents, according to FBI special agent David Faulkner.

Faulkner said the FBI never guaranteed Pelton immunity from prosecution in return for cooperation in the investigation.

"I told Mr. Pelton he had control of the way history viewed this event if he cooperated," Faulkner said. "I never told him what his options were."

Faulkner was responding to accusations by public defender Fred Bennett that the FBI deceived Pelton by indicating he would not be prosecuted if he cooperated with agents.

During that time, agents did not advise him of his right to remain silent or to request an attorney, Faulkner said under cross-examination Thursday.

Bennett indicated Pelton believed the FBI wanted him to be a double agent if he cooperated. Faulkner admitted this was a possibility but never became an option.

Agents also did not advise Pel-

ton that he was free to leave at any time, but did permit him to drive from Annapolis to Washington to visit the apartment of his girlfriend, Faulkner said.

At the time, Faulkner testified, the FBI was conducting electronic surveillance of the woman's apartment and telephone, and of Pelton's automobile and office in an Annapolis marina. In addition, he said, FBI agents followed Pelton and took his passport before he left the hotel.

While Pelton was visiting his girlfriend, Faulkner telephoned him and asked him to return to the hotel, where he was questioned again. Pelton was then formally read his rights and was arrested on espionage charges.

Bennett has sought to show that the FBI induced Pelton to make incriminating statements in violation of his rights. The defense has not contested allegations that Pelton sold the Soviets secrets about the way the NSA collects, decodes and analyzes Soviet communications.

Pelton, 44, is charged with six counts of espionage for selling U.S. intelligence monitoring secrets, and faces life in prison if convicted on all counts.

In a related matter, a CIA official called various media outlets Wednesday night with a statement she said was authorized by the directors of the CIA and the NSA that warned reporters against writing "speculation and additional facts" that go beyond the evidence presented at the trial.